Cinderella

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BROWN WATSON

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Chapter 1

Once upon a time, there lived a nobleman who had a young daughter as beautiful and kind as his wife and they were all very happy.

One day, his wife fell seriously ill and died. The nobleman's daughter loved him very much and could not bear to see him unhappy, so she suggested that he should marry again.

At first, the nobleman could not even think of it, but after a while he began to feel that, for his daughter's sake, it would be a good idea.

The woman he married was cold-hearted and bad-tempered and she had two daughters of her own who were very ugly but had no father to provide for them. So, with this in mind, she pretended to be sweet-natured and pleasant to the nobleman and his daughter.

The nobleman was happy and thought he had made a good choice. It did not take him long to discover he had not.

For, after a while, the stepmother's two daughters became lazy and selfish and the stepmother started to give way to her bad temper.

The nobleman's daughter was more beautiful than her two ugly daughters and this annoyed her greatly.

Whenever she could, the stepmother would make the nobleman's daughter miserable. Eventually she forced her to do all the hard work in the house.

She made her scrub the floors, do the washing-up and wash all the clothes. All the while, the stepmother and the daughters would do nothing but spend hours in front of the mirror trying to make themselves beautiful.

The father saw all this with a heavy heart for, although he loved his daughter very much, he was powerless to help her. His new wife always opposed him. Eventually, he too became ill and died.

Now the stepdaughter was really put to work. All day long she laboured. Her clothes became tattered and worn.

When the poor girl had finished her work, she would go and huddle by the cinders in the fireplace. So the two ugly sisters started calling her "Cinderella".

Meanwhile, at the royal Palace, there were comings and goings, secret meetings and gatherings of all kinds.
Why such a great stir?
Well, the king wanted to leave the throne to his son, but although the prince was old enough to become king, his father wanted him to marry and have a son.
But the prince would not hear of marriage.
Neither promises, threats nor tears could make him change his mind.
The king decided to consult a fortune-teller.

So a fortune-teller was called to the Court. He was very small—almost a dwarf and as thin as a rake. He had bells on his hat and shoes which tinkled whenever he moved.

But, although he looked so comical, he was famous. Many people in the land went to see him with their problems, big or small, and he always managed to solve them one way or another.

This time, the problem was very serious. The prince had somehow to be convinced that he should choose a wife.

They talked and they talked. The king told the fortune-teller all about the prince and, as he did so, the fortune-teller scribbled down what he said in a little yellow note-book.

This suprised the king who thought that fortune-tellers only used magic wands or love potions.

The king's private counsellor was very annoyed because the king had not consulted him.

He advised the king to send the fortune-teller away, but the king refused to change his mind.

And so the king waited for things to happen.

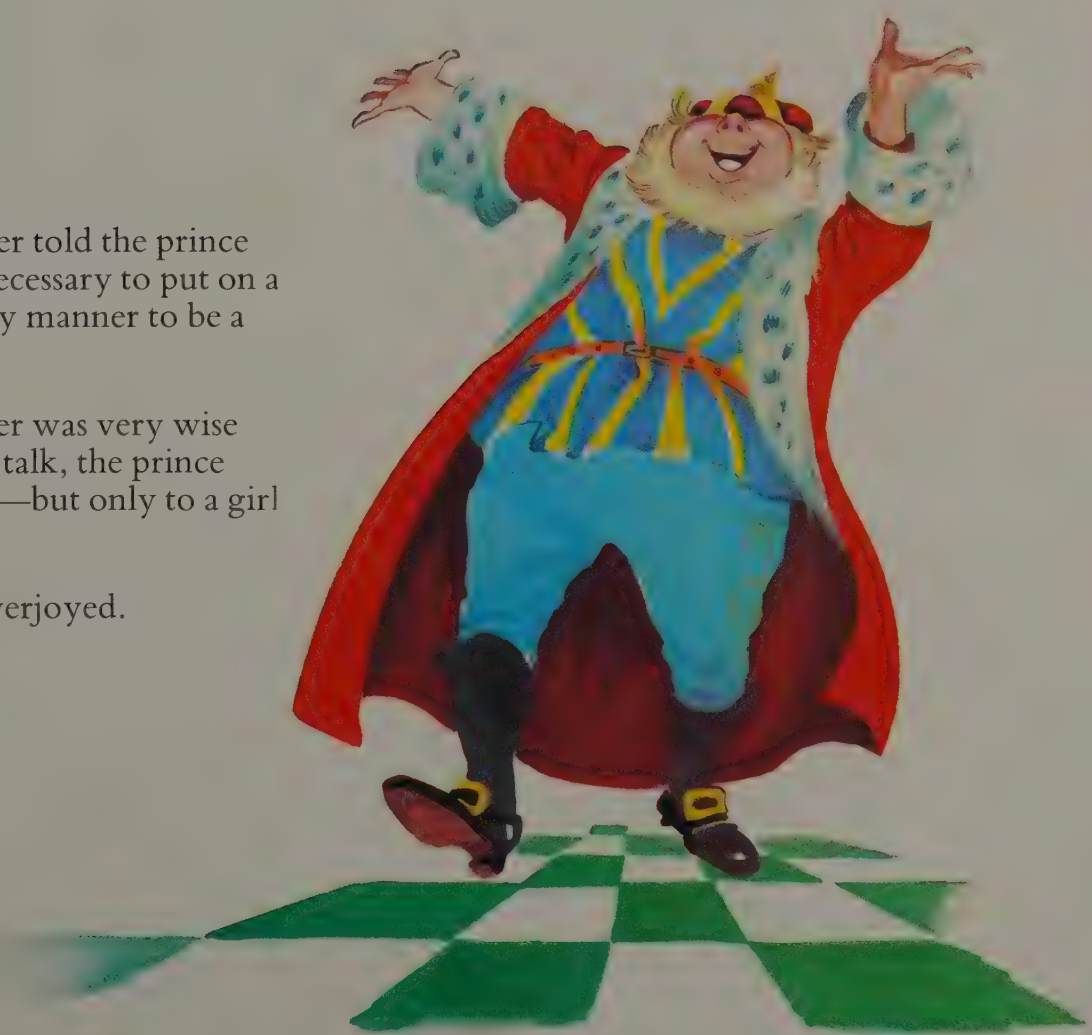
The next day, the fortune-teller went to see the prince with his yellow note-book. He asked the prince why he had refused to get married.

"As far as I am concerned," said the prince, "I have no desire to do so. I enjoy myself with my friends, ride horses for as long as I like, sing at the top of my voice and make fun of my father's high-and-mighty manner. I don't want to be serious about anything."

The fortune-teller told the prince that it was not necessary to put on a high-and-mighty manner to be a king.

The fortune-teller was very wise and, after a long talk, the prince agreed to marry—but only to a girl he loved.

The king was overjoyed.



The king wrote out the following declaration:

"The king is happy to announce that the prince will choose a wife during a ball which will be held at the Court, next Saturday.

"All young ladies of noble birth and rich families are invited."

The king chose the most handsome knights of the Court to read out this declaration throughout the kingdom.

Dressed in shining armour, they covered the whole country.
Everywhere, they were welcomed.

As soon as they appeared, all the people came out of their houses.
Everybody wanted to go to the ball!

Cinderella's step-sisters were invited to the ball.
"We are the most beautiful girls in the land," said the elder sister. "The prince will certainly choose one of us."
Preparations started in wild excitement. The mother, who still considered herself quite young, decided to try her luck as well.
Beautiful dresses were made from the richest materials.
Cinderella had to attend to the final alterations of these dresses and, as she was so kind, she offered to do their hair as well.
The two sisters only teased her.
"Cinderella, would you like to go to the ball?" asked the elder sister.
"Everybody would laugh if they saw Cinderella in those awful rags," mocked the younger sister.
The two sisters were so excited they could not eat for two days. They spent most of the time admiring themselves.

Finally, the great day arrived. The two sisters and their mother set off, instructing Cinderella to clean the house while they were gone until everything shone like a mirror.
Cinderella watched them go. Then she started to cry. What had she done to be so badly treated?
Suddenly, as she was sitting alone in the kitchen, a beautiful lady appeared.
"Do not be suprised, Cinderella", the lovely lady said. "I am your fairy godmother.
"Would you like to go the the ball?"
"Oh yes!" sighed Cinderella.

"Well, I will help you. Go into the garden and fetch me a pumpkin."
Cinderella brought the biggest pumpkin she could find.
Going to the mouse-trap, the fairy godmother harnessed seven mice to the pumpkin. she said some magic words and . . .

. . . the pumpkin was suddenly transformed into a beautiful carriage and the mice into seven horses with glossy coats and long manes.
Only the coachman was missing.
"Go and see if there is a rat in the rat-trap," said the fairy godmother.
Fetching the biggest rat she could find, Cinderella watched as her godmother waved her wand and changed the rat into a coachman.
She could not believe her eyes!

Then she felt sad. She could not go to the ball dressed in her horrid rags.
All of a sudden, Cinderella looked down and found herself in a beautiful dress of blue silk!
On her feet, were the most beautiful pair of glass slippers in the world.
"There is one thing you must promise me before you go," said her godmother. "You must leave the ball before midnight.
"If you don't, your carriage will turn back into a pumpkin, your horses into mice and your clothes into rags again."

Chapter 2

Cinderella thanked her godmother and promised she would be back in time.

Then she got into the carriage.

Cinderella was very excited! So she was going to the ball after all! As the horses trotted through the streets leading to the royal palace, Cinderella thought she must be the happiest girl alive!

In the ballroom, the prince looked gloomy. He did not care for any of the young ladies waltzing past him so he remained seated and refused to dance.
. . . Then Cinderella appeared.

The room went silent.
The men were speechless with admiration and the women green with envy.
The prince went to the beautiful Cinderella and asked her to dance.
All the other ladies, who had not been asked to dance with the prince, felt very jealous.

The prince was overcome by Cinderella's grace and gentleness. Even the king, old as he was, told the queen it had been a long time since he had seen anybody so charming!

The prince was dancing only with Cinderella and the guests were whispering, "Who is this beautiful stranger?"

Cinderella had never been so happy.

Dancing with the prince in the brilliant ballroom, she was in a dream.

The hours went by quickly.

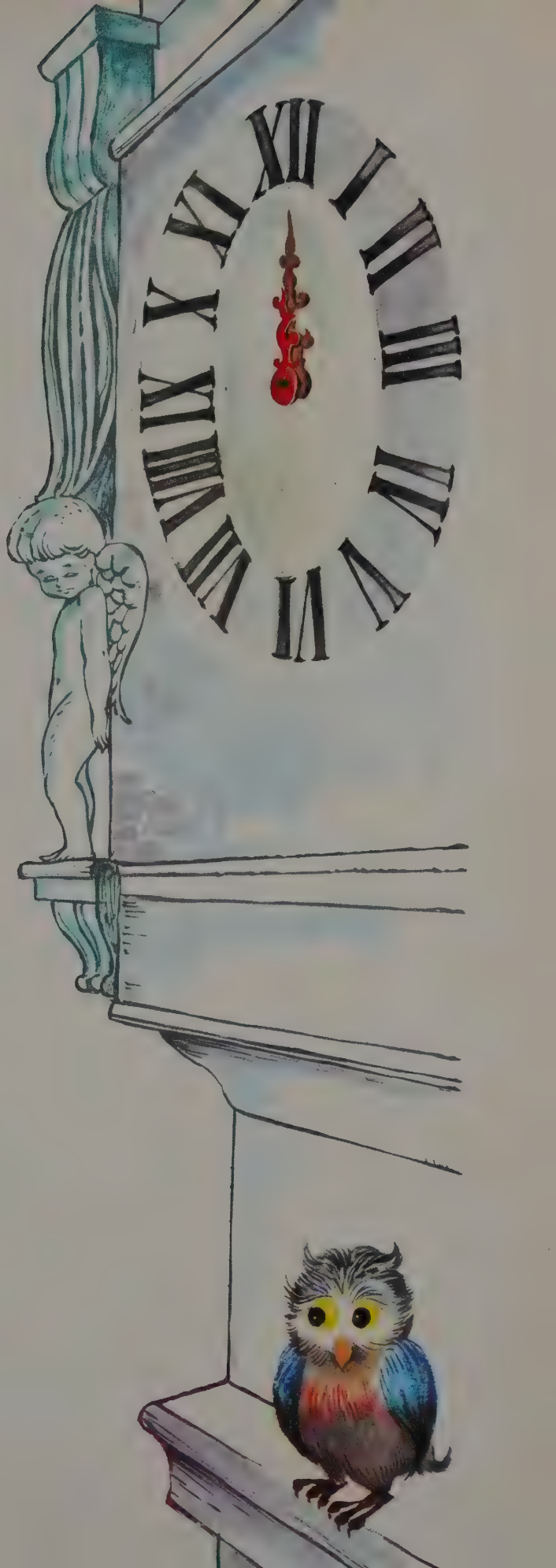
The prince wanted to know who she was, where she lived, when he would see her again but Cinderella only smiled at all his questions.

Both of them wanted the ball to go on for ever.

Cinderella was startled when the clock of the palace slowly struck the twelve chimes of midnight. She had to leave at once!

The prince tried to stop her, but in vain.

Cinderella remembered the promise she had made to her fairy godmother.



The prince followed her as she ran away, but he failed to catch up with her.
In her flight, Cinderella lost one of her glass slippers and the prince found it and carefully picked it up.
He was in despair. Cinderella had gone. He stopped the ball and everybody had to go home.

Chapter 3

Cinderella arrived home, out of breath, without carriage or coachman, and in her rags.

The only thing left was one of the little glass slippers which she slipped into her pocket.

When the two sisters returned from the ball, Cinderella asked them if they had enjoyed it. They were very annoyed.

An unknown princess had come to the ball, they said. The prince had stayed with her all evening and at midnight, she had run away. The prince had then told everybody to go!

The next day, when the others were still asleep, Cinderella went back to her daily chores with bare feet and in rags.

All day long, she worked without stopping.

Her stepsisters were especially nasty to her that day as they were in a very bad mood.

They could not forget the beautiful young girl who had "stolen" the prince from them on the evening of the ball.

Meanwhile, the king was again in despair. He had thought his problem almost solved, but now the prince would not leave his room.

He refused to see anyone or eat anything. Cinderella had gone and no one even knew her name or where she came from.

So, once more, the king called for the fortune-teller. Perhaps *he* could find a solution.

The king's counsellor did not agree, of course.
At first, the prince refused to see the fortune-teller, but finally he opened his door.

The fortune-teller said to the prince,
"I have a solution to your problem.
"To try and find the lady you love, you only have to ask all the women in the land to try the little glass slipper on."

The prince had not thought of this and was surprised. The fortune-teller then explained that because the slipper was so small, it would only fit a very few young ladies.
So began the search. They started with princesses, then duchesses, then to the whole Court, but without success.
Some feet were too long, others too big. The slipper fitted none of them!

Eventually the king ordered two of his knights to travel through the whole kingdom and try the slipper on every young girl's foot.
Some time later, they arrived at the house where Cinderella lived.
The two sisters squeezed and wiggled their feet as they tried to force the tiny glass slipper on to their big feet.

Cinderella recognised her slipper. Her sisters laughed at her when she said she wanted to try it on.
But the knights looked at her carefully and decided that she could, for they had been instructed to try every young woman's foot.
Cinderella slipped it on her foot. It fitted perfectly!

The two sisters were even more astonished when Cinderella drew the other slipper from her pocket. Her fairy godmother suddenly appeared and with a wave of her magic wand changed Cinderella's rags into a beautiful dress again. Her sisters then saw it was Cinderella who had been the beautiful princess at the ball. Ashamed, they fell on their knees to beg her forgiveness. Cinderella forgave them willingly and helped them to their feet.

The king had the good news announced throughout the land. Everybody was invited to the feast held in honour of the prince's marriage to Cinderella.

Of course, there was no question any more of Cinderella having to do any hard tasks!
Her stepmother felt that it was almost one of her own daughters who was going to become a princess, so she made all the arrangements for the wedding.
Flowers and presents kept arriving at the house until the great day finally arrived.

The married couple were beaming with happiness. Everybody enjoyed the wedding feast.
The married couple lived in the palace and, because Cinderella was so kind, she invited her two sisters to come and live with them. They were both married later to two Lords of the Court.

At last, the old king was able to rest in peace!
Later on, the prince became king and Cinderella was the queen of the land!

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